



Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office



News Release

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Santa Barbara County Officials Mark Start of Construction on the New Northern Branch Jail

SANTA MARIA — The Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office broke ground today, October 11, 2016, on the much anticipated Northern Branch Jail Project. A traditional ceremony was held this afternoon at the construction site and future home of the \$111 million dollar, 376-bed facility at 2301 Black Road near Santa Maria.

The event was attended by more than two hundred people and included the many stakeholders who have collaborated over the years to make this project a reality. Attendees included personnel from the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors, Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office, Santa Barbara County General Services and Board of State and Community Corrections. Those involved in the design and construction of the 133,000 square foot facility also attended, as did community leaders and citizens from across Santa Barbara County.

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors Chair Peter Adam spoke at the event and expressed his gratitude at being present for this historic moment. He said, "This is a significant day in Santa Barbara County history. It is especially gratifying to know we are bringing a much needed, modern facility to benefit public safety officers and to improve public safety in the North County."

Sheriff Bill Brown also spoke at the groundbreaking and said this is an important milestone in a 30 year plus effort to obtain a new jail in North Santa Barbara County. He said, "With its investment in the new Northern Branch Jail, the County of Santa Barbara and the Sheriff's Office are leading the way into a new era of corrections that will be hallmarked by a financial boost to the local economy, safer working conditions for custody staff, increased programming and a more humane environment for inmates, a reduction in recidivism and a commensurate increase in public safety."

In her remarks, Chair for the Board of State and Community Corrections Linda Penner, applauded Santa Barbara County for being innovators in the state. She said, "I am

excited to be here to see Santa Barbara County take another huge step toward reducing recidivism.”

Santa Barbara County Assistant County Chief Executive Officer/General Services Director Matt Pontes emceed the event and welcomed the audience to the groundbreaking followed by an invocation from Chaplain Jerry Gray. Together, the Sheriff's Honor Guard and Pipe and Drum posted the colors, Chief Deputy of Custody Operations Vincent Wasilewski led the crowd in a pledge of allegiance and retired California Highway Patrol Assistant Chief Jeff Sgobba sang the National Anthem.

After the speakers, stakeholder representatives wearing official hard hats and holding gold colored shovels participated in a traditional dirt scoop to mark the official beginning of construction. In a celebratory move, Sheriff Brown then took the controls of a backhoe on site, scooped up and dumped a bucket of dirt.

The Type II facility will provide much needed inmate housing for both male and female inmates in a mix of medium and high security areas. Some of the features and benefits include.

- Increased jail system bed capacity that will help relieve overcrowding;
- Direct supervision for most areas of the jail that will enhance security and provide better living and working conditions for both staff and inmates;
- 32 special use beds for mental health and medical purposes;
- An outpatient medical clinic.
- Housing units with multi-purpose rooms to provide space for classes and programs designed to change behavior and reduce recidivism;
- Housing units with exercise yards immediately available;
- A North County location that will decrease the amount of time law enforcement agencies spend transporting and booking inmates;
- 124 full-time employees including 90 custody deputies, many of whom live in the North County and will spend less time commuting;
- An expandable design to meet projected future needs of the county justice system in phases that will be consistent with the original design.

The Northern Branch Jail site was acquired in April of 2008. The Sheriff's Office applied for grant funding and after a competitive process was selected as the recipient of an \$80 million grant from the state to build a new jail. The Conditional Award was accepted in October of 2012. The project kicked off in May of 2013 and construction began in September of 2016. The project is expected to take two years to complete and is scheduled to open in spring 2019.

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